

Message Text

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ACTION ACDA-12

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PARM, UK, US

SUBJECT: UK VIEWS ON DESTRUCTION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS
FACILITIES

REF: A. STATE 91690, B. GENEVA 5468

1. U.K. DEL TO CCD PROVIDED U.S. DEL WITH RESPONSE
TO REQUEST FOR FURTHER DETAILS ON DISPOSITION AND CON-
VERSION OF U.K. CHEMICAL WEAPONS PRODUCTION AND FILLING
FACILITIES.

2. U.K. RESPONSE FOLLOWS: BEGIN QUOTE

A. DETAILS OF CONVERSION OF PREVIOUS FACILITIES.-- TO
THE BEST OF OUR KNOWLEDGE ALL THE SITES INVOLVED CEASED
PRODUCTION AND FILLING BY 1947.

B. PRESENT USE OF FACILITIES.--OUR PRESENT INFORMA-
TION IS THAT SIX SITES WERE INVOLVED IN THE PRODUCTION
OF MUSTARD AGENT DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR. THREE
(ROCKSAVAGE, WADE AND HILLHOUSE) ARE NOW INVOLVED IN THE
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PURELY COMMERCIAL PRODUCTION AND USE OF CHLORINE AND
PHOSGENE. ONE (SPRINGFIELDS) IS NOW OWNED BY BRITISH
NUCLEAR FUELS LTD (BNFL) AND FORMS PART OF A FUEL
FABRICATION PLANT. OF THE REMAINING TWO, ONE (VALLEY)
IS NOW USED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AS A
DEPOT (THE PLANT HAS BEEN REMOVED BUT MANY OF THE
BUILDINGS HAVE BEEN MAINTAINED); THE OTHER (RANDLE)

WAS CLOSED AND DEMOLISHED SOME YEARS AGO AND THE SITE IS NOW USED FOR TIPPING.

C. LEVEL OF INSPECTION OF CONVERTED FACILITIES WHICH WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO US:--

THERE IS NO PROBLEM WITH THE RANDLE SITE, AND WE DO NOT ANTICIPATE ANY WITH VALLEY. THE QUESTION OF INTERNATIONAL INSPECTION OF THE THREE SITES NOW USED FOR COMMERCIAL PRODUCTION BY IMPERIAL CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES LTD (ICI) HAS UNDERSTANDABLY MET WITH AN INITIALLY UNFAVOURABLE REACTION BECAUSE OF THE HIGHLY COMPETITIVE NATURE OF ICI'S COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY. IN THE CASE OF THE SITE NOW USED BY BNFL, TWO OF THE BUILDINGS USED FOR MUSTARD AGENT PRODUCTION STILL CONTAIN OLD PLANT, AND WE THINK IT UNLIKELY THAT THERE WOULD BE OBJECTION TO THE INSPECTION OF THESE. HOWEVER, SOME OF THE OTHER BUILDINGS HAVE BEEN BROUGHT INTO USE AS PART OF THE CURRENT PROCESSING OPERATIONS, WHICH ARE BOTH CIVIL AND MILITARY. IN LINE WITH THE IAEA SAFEGUARDS AGREEMENT, THE CIVIL PART OF THE OPERATIONS ARE ALREADY SUBJECT TO INSPECTION BY IAEA INSPECTORS, AND IN THIS RESPECT THERE IS A PRECEDENT FOR INTERNATIONAL INSPECTION OF THAT PART OF THE FACILITIES. HOWEVER, A FORMAL APPROACH HAS YET TO BE MADE TO THE COMPANY ON THIS QUESTION.

IF IT IS AGREED THAT WE SHOULD STICK TO A 1940 CUT-CONFIDENTIAL

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OFF DATE ON SECURITY GROUNDS (OUR PREFERENCE), WE ARE HOPEFUL THAT AS A RESULT OF RECENT CONTACTS ICI CAN BE PERSUADED TO ACCEPT SOME INSPECTION, ALTHOUGH THEY WOULD NOT WANT TO RELEASE INFORMATION INVOLVING PRECISE DETAILS OF PROCESS AND VOLUME OF OUTPUT, NOR COULD THERE BE ANY ACCESS TO THE MILITARY PART OF THE NUCLEAR FUEL OPERATIONS AT SPRINGFIELDS.

D. SHOULD BOTH FORMER CW PLANT AND BUILDINGS BE DESTROYED?--

IN PRINCIPLE, WE CAN AGREE TO THE DESTRUCTION OF ALL PLANT USED FOR CW PRODUCTION SINCE 1940. HOWEVER, WE DO NOT CONSIDER DESTRUCTION OF BUILDINGS AS A PRACTICAL OPTION SINCE WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE REMAINING BUILDINGS AT THE THREE SITES CURRENTLY OPERATED BY ICI ARE USED FOR COMMERCIAL PROCESSES. WE WOULD EXPECT THE CW PLANT IN THEM TO HAVE BEEN DISMANTLED ALREADY. THAT REMAINING AT SPRINGFIELDS SHOULD NOT CAUSE PROBLEMS, SUBJECT TO THE QUESTION OF COMPENSATION WHICH WE HAVE OF COURSE NOT YET ADDRESSED. 3 MAY 1978. END QUOTE.

3. USDEL MEMBERS SHOULD HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS
THESE MATTERS FURTHER WITH UK REPRESENTATIVES IN THE
MARGINS OF CONSULTATIONS WITH UK, FRG, AND FRANCE ON MAY 9
IN BONN. VANDEN HEUVEL

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